European eyes. And I felt pride in the United States. Its star shone over Europe as the star of hope. The European nations were facing a disastrous economic and political crisis when the Marshall Plan gave them new strength. The United States had come to the rescue of Great Britain in her darkest hour, and now aid was coming from America to all suffering nations, all peoples ruined by the war, without distinction between victors and vanquished, allies and former enemies.

The details of Washington's policy were not very clear to the Europeans. They could not understand the zeal with which Americans preached free enterprise, free trade, and free competition—at the same time demanding strict planning; or American objections to what the Europeans considered necessary measures of social policy—at the same time helping to organize militant labor unions. They were a little amused by the American campaign for productivity, epitomized by washing machines and electrical household appliances. But they were full of admiration for the kindness of the American GI's and the generosity of the U.S. military command toward the civilian population—distribution of food and medicine in liberated areas, rebuilding of roads and bridges, dispatch of fuel and raw materials for the resumption of operations of local factories. Europe had not expected such attention to her needs.

Then had come the 1947 crisis in Europe, produced by poor harvests but rooted largely in the scarcity of goods for exports needed to maintain imports of vitally needed foodstuffs, fuel, and raw materials. The setback threatened to develop into a major economic and political catastrophe. The Communists were mobilizing their forces to exploit the approaching troubles and instigate street riots and upheavals. The Marshall Plan turned the tide. Its psychological and political impacts were even more important than its immediate economic effects.

There was much improvisation under the general heading of "Marshall Plan." Its implementation in different countries, under different heads of mission, was not without contradictions. But the general idea was perfectly clear: The United States was offering Europe economic aid to the extent of more than four billion dollars a year, essentially in merchandise and raw materials needed by the respective countries, without either payment or obligation of any kind and on only one condition—that the European countries themselves make full use of this help to improve their economy.

When we visited Europe, the Plan was in full swing. It was violently attacked by the Communists, but the prevailing opinion among European economists and statesmen as well as simple people was that it had saved Europe.

We met innumerable manifestations of the deep impact American